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SUBJECT: READOUT OF SOUTH AFRICAN BIOTECHNOLOGY OUTREACH EVENTS

REF: A) STATE 160639 B) PRET 000004

¶1. SUMMARY From October 2 - 6, Paul Green, an agricultural economist consultant based in Washington, D.C., visited South Africa on behalf of the International Grain Trade Coalition to discuss with the South African food and feed industries ways to encourage a broader view of sustainable food systems and the ramifications of low level presence of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in relation to trade.

¶2. Green's trip included a press event and meetings in Cape Town. He also was the keynote speaker, and expert panelist, at a workshop on adventitious presence (AP), hosted by AfricaBio, in Pretoria on October 5.

¶3. Mr. Green is well known and respected in the South African biotechnology sector. He is held in high esteem among the public and private sector and his advice and experience were very well received. Overall, this trip addressed the informational needs of the different parties; however, more outreach and interaction are needed as the labeling and AP debate deepens and presents new challenges and questions.

Cape Town

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¶4. On October 2, 2009, AfricaBio, a biotechnology stakeholder's organization held a press conference on food security with presentations by Mr. Paul Green and Prof. Jocelyn Webster, executive director of AfricaBio.

¶5. During the press conference, Mr. Green noted that to encourage a broader view of sustainable food systems, there needs to be unfettered global markets and regulatory coordination to assure access to global supplies of grains and oilseeds. He also challenged media, farmers, traders, food-marketers, regulators, and activists to re-define 'food security and sustainability' to include increases in technology from production and through processing, packaging and marketing. Current definitions focus more on assuring adequate food supplies through the adoption of agricultural-related methods that maintain soil, water, and air quality for future generations.

¶6. The adoption of new production technologies, such as GMOs, and accepting the import of such products, should be included in strategies aimed at increasing food security and sustainability. However, those same technologies face hurdles from active opposition to well-meaning, but unintentional barriers to trade in products of modern biotechnology or genetically modified.

¶7. Mr. Green pointed to the example of dozens of individual events (specific traits) of modern biotechnology in production worldwide and the number of events and area under cultivation is growing

dramatically every year. However, many regulatory systems are behind in the risk assessments for food and environmental safety that will permit them to import grains and oilseeds without concern for their use as food or feed. He noted that simultaneous approvals in all markets for all GM events is not feasible and that the 'Asynchronous Approval' issue poses a threat to food supply chains since exporters from South Africa or any other country will not be willing to make sales into a country where acceptance is not assured.

¶8. He encouraged the SAG to adopt the Codex Alimentarius methodology for managing the presence of such events that have been through a thorough food safety risk assessment process in at least one country. He stated that the Low Level Presence (LLP) process provides a basic toolbox for countries to formulate policies that prevent avoidable trade disruptions, while staying on a science-based risk-assessment and risk-management basis.

¶9. He concluded by stating that the International Grain Trade Coalition (IGTC) advises governments and encourages exporters and importers from throughout the world to address the inherent asynchronous approvals through pro-trade regulatory processes such as the LLP framework. He noted that these are the policies that will permit global consumers to obtain Food Security and Sustainability in an affordable manner.

Pretoria  
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¶10. At the beginning of 2009, the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) set up a working committee to look into developing South African National Standards for the "Requirements for receiving,

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handling, transportation and storage of living modified organisms (LMO) not approved for general release".

¶11. It was suggested at a recent committee meeting that this standard has a direct bearing on GMO commodity imports in RSA. If the standard were adopted in its current draft form, the National Chamber of Milling and other stakeholders would be negatively affected. Previous comments by the milling and grain industries on the SABS standard were uncoordinated and did not effectively influence SABS and the GSA to implement realistic and practical conditions.

¶12. To address this, AfricaBio in collaboration with partners, hosted a one day adventitious presences workshop, where Paul Green, an international expert on the issue, addressed South African stakeholders, government regulators, and policy makers on the possible implications of national regulations impacting on grain trade globally.

¶13. The purpose of this workshop was to provide South African agricultural biotech stakeholders with an overview of the procedures followed for approval, handling, distribution and trade of agricultural biotechnology products around the world.

¶14. The one day workshop on "Adventitious Presence" took place at the St George Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa on Monday the 5th of October 2009. The workshop was attended by 32 participants from Government departments, seed companies, grain trade organizations, Silo Association, public research institutions, agri-business chamber, South African Bureau of Standards, Animal and Feed Manufacturers Association, SA Chambers of Milling, and media.

¶15. The agenda included an update on the global status of GM crops and benefits to developing farmers in South Africa by Dr. Dave Keetch, AfricaBio. Paul Green presented on the status of global food and feed supply chains, risk assessment of low level presence (LLP), impacts of regulatory policy decisions on global food and feed supply chains, and ensuring access and creating national enabling environments. Mr. Braam Olivier, the Maize Procurement Manager at Tongaat Hulett Starch, gave a presentation on the importance of identity preservation in the grain industry in South Africa. He

highlighted some of his concerns with the way grain separation is handled by the silos and the lack of proper directives and standards from the department of Agriculture on the procedures for handling and separating grains. He also discussed his concerns about the various GMO testing facilities in the country and the fraudulent issuing of GM free certificates for export.

#### AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

¶16. Discussions by the participants highlighted the need for greater dialogue between the various government departments and the major stakeholders. It was pointed out that only the government could alter the legislation and on this point the respective government departments need to be vigorously lobbied by the major stakeholders to act in the interests of South Africa's trading importers and exporters.

It was agreed that as more and more countries started growing GM crops and as the global area under cultivation increased, the chances of commingling increased. In the same way the non-GM niche market would continue to grow. People and businesses that required Qmarket would continue to grow. People and businesses that required non-GM products would have to pay a premium.

¶17. It was felt that whatever policy or guidelines South Africa decided to adopt should be acceptable to other SADC states as there was an urgent need for harmonization of policy pertaining to GMOs within the SADC community. In this regard South Africa should play a leadership role as the only African country that has had an extensive experience of GMOs.

¶18. The audience felt that the recently approved SA Consumer Protection Bill that required the mandatory labeling of all GM products needed further discussion and this issue also had a bearing on the handling of Adventitious Presence. Both subjects should reflect South Africa's overall stance on GMOs and the risk associated with their commingling with non-GM products.

¶19. It was also pointed out that Codex Alimentarius had recently approved guidelines for the risk assessment of GMOs. As a member of Codex Alimentarius, South Africa should adopt this as a guideline.

¶20. While AfricaBio had participated in the debate on the Draft Consumer Protection Bill, more industry members now need to become

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active and involved. It was suggested that AfricaBio could assist future efforts by undertaking a project to estimate the expense as well as the political and trade ramifications of labeling all or a prescribed list of GM products compared to only labeling products that did not contain GM products. It was suggested that AfricaBio might approach NACI for financial support to undertake such a study.

¶21. COMMENT: EB-funded programs such as this provide an invaluable contribution to the GMO debate. These workshops and conferences are well attended by all sectors of the biotech industry and give the parties the opportunity to engage in lively and informative debates.

Other organizations that support the development of a progressive biotech sector in South Africa have significantly reduced funding of similar activities leading to a paucity of new and timely information on important subjects related to GMOs. Even though South Africa is considered a leader in biotechnology on the African continent, recent issues with labeling and liability need to be resolved in order for them to maintain that status. These EB funded activities provide the information and expertise needed to address these concerns. END COMMENT.

GIPS